

Watervliet Shakers South Family Residence,
Building #3
South of Troy Shaker Road (State Route #155),
approximately 1/4 mile east of Sand Creek Road
Albany Vicinity (Colonie)
Albany County
New York

HABS No. NY-3261

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-3261

WATERVLIET SHAKERS SOUTH FAMILY RESIDENCE,
BUILDING #3

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Location. South of Troy Shaker Road (State Route #155), approximately 1/4 mile east of Sand Creek Road, Albany Vicinity (Colonie), Albany County, New York.

Present Owner: Mr. Leonard Bol, Shaker Road, Albany, New York.

Present Use: Dwelling; rented to tenants.

Brief Statement of Significance: This structure was the main dwelling house of the South Family of Watervliet Shakers.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Physical History

- A. Original and Subsequent Owners. Original owners: Watervliet Shakers South Family. Since 1939, Mr. Leonard Bol.
- B. Date of Erection: 1822.
- C. Builder. "Built by Brauster and Allen, Master Masons, 1822." This inscription can be found on the cornerstone of the building. These men were not members of the Shaker community.
- D. Original construction: Originally the building consisted only of the main, brick, rectangular block.
- E. Notes on Alterations and Additions: The one-story wing to the north (with wood siding) is a later addition. It was used as a meeting room until the last years of the Family, when it was used as a salesroom. Other more recent additions, made before the Family finally sold the property, were the enclosed porch on the west side and the "attached" shed on the east side. Since the South Family left, a number of changes have been made (see photo taken in 1962).
- F. Sources of Information: Hopping, D.M.C., and Watland, Gerald R. "The Architecture of the Shakers," Antiques, Vol. 72, No. 4 (October 1957), 335-339.

Lassiter, William Lawrence. "A Catalog of Shaker Photographs and Measured Drawings in the Historic Collection of the New York State Education Department, Albany, New York." An unpublished catalog of Shaker material belonging to the

University of the State of New York, Division of Archives
and History, Albany, New York, 1960.

Melcher, Marguerite Fellows. The Shaker Adventure.
Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1941.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This building becomes a study in the history of the Shaker movement in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the original section of the structure can be seen the rigid adherence to the rules laid down by the Millennial Laws - the simplicity and starkness - that characterized Shaker building activities from c. 1805 until the Civil War period. The later additions indicate that eventually the diminishing sect could no longer deny the influence of the "world."

Although the following paragraph from D.M.C. Hooping and Gerald R. Watland's article, "The Architecture of the Shakers" in Antiques, October 1957, (pp. 235-6), describes a Shaker dwelling house in a general way, and is therefore in part inaccurate in describing the South Family Residence since each Shaker family adapted itself to the particular needs of their location, size, and economics, it nevertheless gives one an idea of the character of the building when it was the active center of a thriving community. "The residence buildings were invariably multistoried, whether of wood or masonry construction. Two separate entrances were provided for the two sexes and generally the entrances were hooded. The elders occupied separate apartments on the main floor, with brethren and sisters living dormitory-style in the rooms above. Though several brethren or several sisters occupied each room, only one small cupboard with shelves was provided, as the Shakers had no possessions of their own. Wood peg rails were built in on all four walls for the hanging of garments, hats, chairs, baskets. The Shakers were clever in locating their chimneys; nearly every room had an outlet for a small cast-iron stove of distinctive character, made according to the Shaker's own design. Often the basements of the residence buildings were put to use as laundries, kitchens, or shops."

Marguerite Fellows Melcher, in her book The Shaker Adventure, (p. 199), describes the Watervliet Shakers South Family Residence. It "is still in perfect alignment, its pine and chestnut beams are held in place by the old dowel pins, its hand-forged iron nails and braces are still resisting rust. The plainness of these many-

windowed structures is saved from factory starkness by their uncrowded setting in spacious landscape and by the impression they give of tranquil, ordered living."

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: 54'-0 1/2" (west side) x 42'-0 1/2"; two-and-a-half stories; rectangular layout, plus a later one-story, northern wing.
2. Foundations: Stone. The basement walls are exposed on the east side.
3. Wall construction: Brick - Flemish bond.
4. Porches, etc.: Modern enclosed porch with triangular pediment - west side. Modern wooden shed addition - east side.
5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys (two chimneys at both the north and south sides).
6. Openings:
 - a. Doors: Wooden, six-panel doors.
 - b. Windows: Double-hung wooden sashes. (Drawings indicate nine-over-nine lights; 1962 photo, two-over-two lights).
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with slate covering.
 - b. Cornice: Main cornice; two coves separated by corona.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas: A single wooden dormer, centrally located, on west front.
A small wooden "call bell" cupola at the gable ridge, centrally located.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central-hall plan (plus a meeting room addition of one story to the north).
2. Stairways: Typical, simple, Shaker balusters and rails.

3. Flooring: Basement: both wood and stone flooring.
 4. Decorative features and trim: Plain wooden trim.
 5. Notable hardware: Original, Shaker wrought iron hardware.
- D. Site: Site slopes down to the east.

Prepared by John C. Poppeliers, Architectural Historian
National Park Service
February 1963.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SHAKER SOUTH FAMILY DWELLING HOUSE, BUILDING #3
(SHAKER SOUTH FAMILY RESIDENCE)

HABS No. NY-3261

An addendum to the data pages compiled in 1963
Shaker South Family Dwelling House, Building #3
Watervliet, New York

This dwelling house, built in 1800, was described by Thomas Brown, an apostate and an historian, in his book; An Account of the People Called Shakers, Troy, New York, 1812, p. 152; as "a large commodious house...in the lower part of which a partition opens and enlarges the meetingroom." A partition does appear in the HABS drawings of this building. Shaker Records of the South Family; New York State Library, CMID403, folder #1; mention a dwelling house built in 1800 and this structure is the only early building large enough to be a dwelling. This building appears on a map of Watervliet from 1839, now in possession of Charles Thompson of Canterbury, New Hampshire. The call bell is not indicated on the map of 1839, it is believed to have been added October 7, 1848 and at the same time the roof was covered with tin.

Information provided by: Dorothy M. Filley
Museum Consultant
Colonie, New York
May, 1975